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Pentecost 12b  
August 19, 2012

## Take refuge in the LORD Psalm 34:1-22

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.  
Psalm 34.

*Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech so that he drove him away and David left.*

*I will bless the LORD at all times; my mouth will continually praise him. My soul will boast in the LORD; the afflicted will hear and be glad.*

*Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.*

*I sought the LORD, and he answered me. He rescued me from all my terrors. They look to him and are radiant. Their faces do not blush with shame. This afflicted man called out, and the Lord heard him. He saved him from all his adversities. The angel of the LORD stays camped around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is everyone who takes refuge in him. Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. A young lion suffers want and hunger, but those who seek the LORD will never lack anything good.*

*Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*

*Whose the person who delights in life, who wants to live many days in order to see good? Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceitfully. Turn away from evil and do good. Seek peace and pursue it.*

*The LORD's eyes look to the righteous; his ears listen to their cry. (The LORD's face is against evildoers to cut off the memory of them from the earth.) The righteous called out, and the LORD heard them. He rescued them from all their adversities. The LORD is near to the broken-hearted, and he saves those crushed in spirit. The righteous suffer many evils, but the LORD rescues him from them all. He guards all his bones; not one of them is broken. The wicked will be killed by evil, and those who hate the righteous will be condemned. The LORD redeems the soul of his servant. No one who takes refuge in him will be condemned. (Psalm 34:1-22).*

This is the word of our Lord.

Dear friends in Christ, fellow saints washed clean in the blood of our risen Savior:

He was trapped behind enemy lines. Someone had recognized him. The exits were guarded. He could not escape. What was he to do? He pretended to be out of his mind. Drool dribbled down his beard. He made meaningless marks on the gates. He had the mind of a beast not a man. How could this madman be the enemy soldier he was accused of being? So Achish, the man in charge, drove him away. He didn't need any more lunatics around him.

This is not some spy story. Achish, also known as Abimelech, was king of Gath, a Philistine city, whose best-known hometown champion had been Goliath. And this pretend madman was David -- yes, that David.

What was he doing hanging out with the enemy? He was hiding, hiding from his own king, King Saul, who was trying to hunt him to death. He was so afraid and desperate that he thought he would be safer in the hometown of Goliath rather than among his own people. Why would he take refuge among the Philistines rather than in the Lord? Like you and me, David not only had earthly hardships in life but he also had spiritual valleys when his faith grew weak.

The Lord had promised David that he would be the next king of Israel. David believed God's word. But the point of Saul's spear just seemed too close. He felt alone,

isolated, cut off, like a deer chased by a pack of wolves. How long could he last on his own? At least in Gath he was out of King Saul's reach.

But was he really alone? Couldn't the Lord have kept him safe? Did he really need to take refuge among the enemy? Yet despite David's weakness, the Lord is faithful. He kept his promise to David and brought him safely out of Gath. David's faith rejoices by writing Psalm 34. Ponder and cherish this word from God written down for us through the hand of David. Find in these words the strength to take refuge in the Lord no matter how alone, desperate, or fearful you may feel at times. Take refuge in the Lord. That's the theme today.

### **A. With humility that boasts in the Lord**

Let's begin looking at the Psalm: Psalm 34 "Of David. When he pretended to be insane before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he left. I will extol the LORD at all times; his praise will always be on my lips. My soul will boast in the LORD; let the afflicted hear and rejoice. Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together" (Psalm 34:1-3 NIV84).

He gives all the credit to God, doesn't he? And he let's others know it. He doesn't boast about his own cunning or of how great an actor he was to fool them all. He doesn't talk about how lucky he was that they bought into it his insanity plea. He gives all the credit to the Lord. He doesn't boast about himself or his luckiness. He boasts in the Lord.

That's a lesson for us to apply each day. See the Lord's hand behind all that is good in your life, dear friends. That good may come to you through family or friends, through your own hard work or honed skills, through your community or church. It may even come to you through what others might call dumb luck. But you know better. All that is good comes from the open hands of our heavenly Father. He is merciful and compassionate toward us. You know that. Let others know it too. Say with David, "Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name together" (Psalm 34:3 NIV84).

Now what does it mean to glorify the Lord or to boast in the Lord? It means to clearly make known the good things he has done. When people boast, they tell about their great accomplishments. When we boast in the Lord, we tell others of his great accomplishments. It's so much more than simply saying, "Praise the Lord!" or "God is great! God is good!" It tells why God is so great and good. It tells what we are praising him for.

And that's what we hear David doing as he continues in the Psalm. "I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the LORD answered him; he saved him out of all his troubles." (Psalm 34:4-6 NIV84).

Even as David boasts in the Lord, his humility is clear. How different the world around us sounds! If you're good at something, let others know it. Self-assertiveness brings success. Those who make it life are those with the most self-confidence. That's what the world says. But how different David's believing heart is!

He mentions himself only to give credit to the Lord for delivering him. Then he quickly takes the spotlight off of what happened to him. It's not as if the Lord helped him because he was so special or so much more than others. No. Rather, David wants us to know that anyone who looks to the Lord in faith can count on his help with confidence. "Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame." (Psalm 34:5 NIV84). As for himself, he's "this poor man." Yet as undeserving as he was, the Lord answered and saved him from his troubles.

For you see, "the angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them" (Psalm 34:7). The Lord's angel is a guard camped around those who fear the Lord, those who place him above all else, trembling at his greatness that does such good things for us. David knew this from his own experience. He had tasted the goodness of the Lord. He invites us as well. "Taste and see, that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him" (Psalm 34:8 NIV84). Take refuge in the Lord, dear Christian

friends. For you are his saints, his holy people, washed clean in the blood of Jesus. Come before him not in the terror that cringes under the penalty of hell earned by our sins. Rather, come in that fear that bows in holy awe trembling in amazement that the holy, almighty God would rescue sinners like you or me, providing refuge and all our needs out of his magnanimity. "Fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. The lion may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing" (Psalm 34:9, 10 NIV84). The strong of this earth might roar like a young lion, but in the end they are weak and hungry. How different for those who seek the Lord, those who take refuge in him with humility that boasts in the Lord!

That summarizes the first lesson for us to learn as we take refuge in the Lord. Take refuge in the him with humility that boasts in the Lord alone.

## **B. With righteousness that pursues the good.**

Now David continues and teaches us how those who fear the Lord live. As we take refuge in the Lord, we live each day in that holy fear that holds him and his word in highest regard. For his word declares what righteousness is.

David writes, "Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days, keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:11-14 NIV84).

How practical these words are! If you want to know what to be working at day by day, if you want to know how to put your faith into practice, these words give us much guidance. "Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:13, 14 NIV84). What a picture of righteousness!

Guard the words that come out of your mouth. Do they glorify your heavenly Father or discredit his holy name. Do they build up others with God's truth or tear down their faith in his word? Do they come from a heart that's trying to protect itself or advance itself even if that means coloring the truth? Rather than taking refuge in the Lord, do we trust our own words to get us through?

"Turn from evil and do good" (Psalm 34:14 NIV84). Even when others wrong you are act unkindly, don't return evil with evil, but repay wickedness with goodness, kindness, forgiveness. "Seek peace and pursue it" (Psalm 34:14 NIV84).

When we take refuge in the Lord, we want to live according to his righteousness. That's the fear the Lord. That's the second point to take home from this Psalm. Take refuge in the Lord with righteousness that pursues what's truly good.

## **C. With confidence in the Lord's deliverance**

And the third and finally point is this: Take refuge in the Lord with confidence in his deliverance. David expresses this confidence, "The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry; the face of the LORD is against those who do evil to cut off the memory of them from the earth. The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles." (Psalm 34:15-17 NIV84).

Don't misunderstand this promise. Confidence in the Lord's deliverance does not mean a trouble-free life on earth. David knew that well. After the Lord rescued him from Gath, he still was on the run from Saul. Even after David became king, that's when he experienced some of his greatest heartbreaks.

So he finishes the Psalm, "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all; he protects his bones, not one of them will be broken. Evil will slay the sicked; the foes of the righteous will be condemned. The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him" (Psalm 34:18-22 NIV84).

So dear friends, when your spirit is crushed with guilt, when sin breaks your heart, when you see your spiritual poverty with nothing to offer your God, take refuge in the LORD. Find your peace and confidence in the wounds of Jesus Christ. Not one of his bones

was broken as he hung on the cross for you. His blood has redeemed you. He delivers you from eternal death. Satan can no longer accuse you in God's courtroom. For the Lord has declared you not-guilty through faith Jesus. Take refuge in this verdict. For no matter what happens on this earth, no matter how many troubles the righteous face, your confidence is in Jesus. Even if our enemies break our bones, we will be made whole in the resurrection. Through faith in Jesus you have the eternal refuge waiting for you, when your heavenly Father delivers you from this world of sorrow, this vale of tears, to himself in glory.

Take refuge in the Lord. Take refuge in him with humility that boasts in the Lord, with righteousness that pursues what's truly good, with confidence in the Lord's deliverance. Take refuge in Jesus, your Redeemer who brings you God's verdict of acquittal . "The LORD redeems his servants; no one will be condemned who takes refuge in him" (Psalm 34:22 NIV84). Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.